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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION - PRESIDENT OBAMA'S NEWS
CONFERENCE: MAY 1, 2009

Summary: President Obama's remarks that he made in a prime-time news conference marking the 100-day milestone of his presidency that the Pakistani government was "extremely fragile" but "able to protect nuclear arms" dominated headlines in all major newspapers on Friday. Some sample headlines about Obama's remarks: "Govt. 'fragile', but able to protect N-arms: Obama" (Dawn); "We want strong relations with the army; Pakistan's civilian government is weak: Obama," (Nawa-i-Waqt); "Concerned about weak civilian government in Pakistan: U.S. President," (Jang); "Pakistan's nuclear weapons are completely safe: President Obama," (Islam); "Worried Obama confident about Pak nuclear weapons' security," (Daily Times); "Obama says biggest threat to Pakistan internal, not India," (Business Recorder). End Summary.

News Stories

"Govt. 'Fragile,' But Able To Protect N-Arms: Obama" "Dawn" (05/01)

"U.S. President Barack Obama has said he is confident Pakistan can secure its nuclear arsenal from militants but expressed grave concerns about the security situation in the country. He described the current Pakistani government as 'extremely fragile' which was unable to fulfill the basic needs of its people and that's why it was unable 'to gain the support and the loyalty of their people.' 'I'm confident that we can make sure that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is secure,' Mr. Obama said at his third prime-time news conference since assuming office 100 days ago.'"

"We Want Strong Relations With The Army; Pakistan's Civilian Government Is Weak: Obama," "Nawa-i-Waqt" (05/01)

"President Obama has said that he has grave concerns about the stability of the Pakistan government but he is fully confident that Pakistan's nuclear weapons will not land in Muslim militants' hands. Addressing a press conference at the completion of 100 days in office, he said that he has grave concerns about the situation in Pakistan."

"Concerned About Weak Civilian Government in Pakistan: U.S. President Obama" "Jang" (05/01)

"President Obama has said that the nuclear assets of Pakistan are safe, but Pakistan Army is well aware of the dangers if they fall into the wrong hands. 'U.S. has strategic interests in Pakistan and we respect its sovereignty and wish that Pakistan is strong and

stable,' President Obama said. We want to strengthen our contacts with the Pakistan Army, he added. 'Al Qaeda and Taliban are the single direct threat to the national security of the United States and they can harm our national interest.'"

"Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Are Completely Safe: President Obama"
"Islam" (05/01)

"Addressing a prime-time news conference on his 100th day in the office, President Obama said, 'I am very concerned about situation in Pakistan not because Taliban are going to take control of Pakistan, but because the civilian government right now is very fragile. And it seems that it does not have capacity to provide basic services like education, healthcare, rule of law, peace and justice to the people of Pakistan, American President said. We respect Pakistan's sovereignty, but we also recognize that our national security interests are linked with a stable Pakistan. 'We also acknowledge that we have huge strategic interests in Pakistan and do not want to see it as an extremist state armed with nuclear arsenal' U.S. President added."

"Worried Obama Confident Over Pak Nuclear Weapons' Security" "Daily Times" (05/01)

"U.S. President Barack Obama said on Wednesday that he is 'gravely concerned' about the stability of the Pakistani government, but is confident that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal will not fall into the hands of the Taliban. Addressing a prime-time news conference on his 100th day in office, Obama called the government in Pakistan 'very fragile.' But he said, 'I'm confident that we can make sure that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is secure.' 'I am more concerned that the civilian government right now is very fragile and don't

seem to have the capacity to deliver basic services, said Obama. 'As a consequence, it's very difficult for them to gain the support and loyalty of their people,' he added. 'So we need to help Pakistan and Pakistanis. And I think that there's a recognition increasingly on the part of both the civilian government there and the army that that is their biggest weakness," said Obama."

"Obama Says Biggest Threat To Pakistan Internal, Not India"
"Business Recorder" (05/01)

"U.S. President Barack Obama has said Pakistan's army has begun to realize that home-grown militants and not India pose the biggest threat to stability, after troops retook a key town from Taliban militants. Obama also told a news conference in Washington on Wednesday he was confident about the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and that the Pakistani Army recognized the dangers of weapons, falling into the wrong hands. 'On the military side, you're starting to see some recognition just in the last few days that the obsession with India as the mortal threat to Pakistan has been misguided, and that their biggest threat right now comes internally,' he said. 'And you're starting to see the Pakistani military takes much more seriously the armed threat from militant extremists.' 'U.S. President Barack Obama on Wednesday voiced confidence about the security of Pakistan's nuclear assets and renewed his administration's strong support for country's stability beset with challenges from militants. 'I'm confident that we can make sure that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is secure. Primarily, initially, because the Pakistan Army, I think, recognizes the hazards of those weapons falling into the wrong hands,' he said. 'We've got strong military-to-military consultation and cooperation," Obama told a White House news conference, marking first one hundred days of his presidency. He declined to be drawn into any hypothetical worst case scenarios about Pakistani nuclear assets and whether the U.S. could ensure their security, if need be."

"Pakistan's Civilian Govt. Very Fragile, Says Obama; U.S. President Says Military Overcoming Its 'Misguided' India Obsession" "The News" (05/01)

"U.S. President Barack Obama said Pakistan's Army had begun to realize that home-grown militants and not India posed the biggest threat to stability, after troops retook a key town from the Taliban militants. Obama also told a news conference in Washington on Wednesday, he was confident about the security of Pakistan's nuclear

arsenal and that the Pakistan Army recognized the dangers of weapons falling into the wrong hands. 'On the military side, you're starting to see some recognition just in the last few days that the obsession with India as the mortal threat to Pakistan has been misguided, and that their biggest threat right now comes internally,' he said."

"Pak govt. Fragile: Obama; Obama Does Not Rule Out U.S. Intervention If Nuclear Assets Come Under Threat" "The Nation" (05/01)

"U.S. President Barack Obama said Wednesday that he was 'gravely concerned' about the stability of the Pakistan government but that he was confident Pakistan's nuclear arsenal would not fall into the hands of militants. 'I'm confident that we can make sure that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is secure,' Obama said at a prime-time news conference marking his first 100 days in office. 'Primarily, initially, because the Pakistani army, I think, recognizes the hazards of those weapons falling into the wrong hands. We've got strong military-to-military consultation and cooperation,' he said in response to a question. The question put to President Obama was: 'Pakistan appears to be at war with the Taliban inside their own country. Can you reassure the American people that, if necessary, America could secure Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and keep it from getting into the Taliban's hands or, worst case scenario, even al Qaeda's hands?' Obama called the government in Pakistan, where army forces are battling Taliban militants, 'very fragile.'"

"Pakistani Government Is Weak; Is Unable To Provide Basic Facilities To The Public: Obama" "Express" (05/01)

"U.S. President Obama has said that Pakistan's nuclear assets are safe but Pakistan's civilian government is weak and unable to provide basic amenities to the people. Addressing a press conference at the completion of 100 days in office, he said that he

has grave concerns about the situation in Pakistan not because the Taliban are about to take over or that the government is being toppled, but because the civilian government there is very fragile and is unable to provide basic services to the public - which are necessary to win public support and loyalty. He said we need to help Pakistan and Pakistanis."

"We Will Take Action If Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Land In The Hands Of Extremists: Obama" "Khabrain" (05/01) (Note: the text of the story in Khabrain does not include any reference to the headline. End note)

"U.S. President Obama has said that he has grave concerns about Pakistan's stability and added that Pakistan's civilian government is very weak and we need to help it. He said that Pakistan faces internal threats, not threats from India. Addressing a press conference on completion of 100 days in office, he said that Pakistan's government is weak and unable to provide basic facilities like health, education and justice to its people. He said we should help Pakistan provide these services to its people."

"Worried About fragile Civilian Government, Want To Strengthen Ties with Pak Army: Obama" "Ausaf" (05/01)

"U.S. President Obama while addressing a press conference in Washington has said that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is secure. 'Pakistan Army is aware of the fact that the biggest threat comes from within and not from India' stated American President. 'Pak Army has started to take extremists more seriously, and we hope that they will continue to move in this direction. He said that the U.S. is confident that Pakistan's nuclear arms are secured."

"Pak Govt. Very Fragile, Nuclear Arsenal Safe: Obama" "Pakistan Observer" (05/01)

"The U.S. President Barack Obama has said that Pakistan's government was 'very fragile,' but was confident that the country's nuclear arsenal would not fall into militant hands. 'You're starting to see the Pakistani military take much more seriously the armed threat from militant extremists,' Obama told his third prime-time nationally televised press conference since assuming office on January 20. Obama, who completed his first 100 days in office today, said the civilian government in Pakistan is 'very fragile'

and doesn't have the capacity to even deliver the basic services to its citizens. 'I am gravely concerned about the situation in Pakistan, not because I think that they're immediately going to be overrun and the Taliban would take over in Pakistan. I'm more concerned that the civilian government there right now is very fragile and don't seem to have the capacity to deliver basic services: schools, health care, rule of law, a judicial system that works for the majority of the people.'"

"Zardari Govt. Is 'Very Fragile,' Says Obama" "The Statesman" (05/01)

"US President Barack Obama has voiced worries about the weakness of Pakistan's government and did not rule out US intervention if the Islamic power's nuclear weapons fell into extremist hands.

In a prime-time news conference marking the 100-day milestone of his presidency, Obama said he was increasingly confident that Pakistan was serious about fighting militants and that its nuclear weapons were secure. But Obama said that the civilian government of President Asif Ali Zardari, who is due in Washington next week, was unable to provide basic services that would ensure people's loyalty.

'I am gravely concerned about the situation in Pakistan, not because I think that they're immediately going to be overrun and the Taliban would take over in Pakistan,' Obama said. 'I am more concerned that the civilian government right now is very fragile and don't seem to have the capacity to deliver basic services, like health care and the rule of law. As a consequence, it's very difficult for them to gain the support and loyalty of their people,' Obama said."

Op-ed

"Obama Throws A Ton Of Bricks On Zardari," news analysis by Group

Editor Shaheen Sehbai in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/04)

"President Barack Obama's 100th day prime TV time press conference on Wednesday night has created a grossly uneven playing field for President Asif Ali Zardari's upcoming visit to Washington, as the candid and frank, almost brutal, observations of Obama have cut Zardari to a very small size besides giving the Pakistan Army much more importance than the Pakistani leadership would like to hear....

It dug deep into the credibility and future of the civilian set-up, specially the fate of Zardari himself, who everyone in Washington knows, has been running Pakistan as a one-man show. So the criticism hits the Pakistani President right where it hurts."

Feierstein